

**Elders Council of Newcastle**

**OLDER PERSON FRIENDLY CITY  
PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS**



**Report from a Working Group  
September 2008**

## **WHAT IS THE ELDERS COUNCIL OF NEWCASTLE?**

The Elders Council of Newcastle was established in 2001 to provide an effective voice for older people who are resident or active in the City of Newcastle upon Tyne. Membership is free and open to anyone over the age of 50. The Elders Council of Newcastle is a registered charity.

In 2004 the Elders Council joined with Age Concern Newcastle and Newcastle Healthy City to form the Quality of Life Partnership (QoLP) which receives financial support from Newcastle City Council, the NHS Primary Care Trust and other agencies. In co-operation with Newcastle City Council, the QoLP produced the City's strategy for an ageing population, named Everyone's Tomorrow, which was launched in 2007.

A large part of the contribution which the Elders Council makes to the QoLP is through the activities of a series of working groups, of which the Older Person Friendly City Group is one. Other groups are looking at further issues of concern to older people such as health, social care, housing, transport, cultural facilities and the needs of the older learner.

In 2008/09 the Elders Council continues to aim:

1. to promote the benefit and social inclusion of elders by providing a voice on issues concerning their quality of life, health and wellbeing, and
2. to realise the potential of elders as a creative and active resource for the community.

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# INTRODUCTION

'Everyone's Tomorrow' is the title of a document setting out a strategy to improve the quality of life of our ageing population in Newcastle upon Tyne. One of the aims of the strategy is that older people should be able to enjoy 'older person friendly environments'. As we get older we need services, and homes that support independent living. In addition, we need to be able to get out and about in neighbourhoods where we can move around in safe streets, and also enjoy fresh air, exercise and open green spaces.

In April 2007 an Elders Council Working Group launched a report of an assessment of the 'older person friendliness' of the City Centre. This was based on an audit by older people themselves of the features which enabled or prevented enjoyment of the amenities of the City, and demonstrated that the Elders Council can make a useful contribution by highlighting the practical ways in which a strategy can be implemented.

Since 2007 the Working Group has set itself the task of assessing parks and recreation areas in the City. This report of the work is now put forward with the following aims:

1. To contribute to implementing the strategy on older person friendly environments by documenting the facilities that will promote greater use of outdoor spaces by older people.
2. To highlight the potential for parks and recreation areas to enhance their contribution to the physical and mental health, and the social wellbeing, of a local population, inclusive of older people.
3. To contribute to discussions about lifetime neighbourhoods by promoting opportunities for older people to become involved in planning healthy environments with access to essential amenities, including green open spaces.

## **BACKGROUND**

Parks in Newcastle have developed over the last 150 years to provide pleasure grounds and healthy open spaces for city residents. For many years parks provided the main recreation areas in many towns and were maintained with pride by local authorities with colourful floral displays, band concerts and entertainment in the summer, and a few swings and a roundabout for children. Over the last fifty years or so, improvements in housing conditions and the spread of car ownership have resulted in changes in leisure pursuits and less dependence on urban parks for recreation. At the same time, pressure on council budgets and reductions in maintenance and staffing, resulted in some parks appearing neglected. For a few years now this trend is being reversed as Councils are encouraged to work in partnership with local groups to access funding to upgrade parks again.

In preparation for this programme of work, the Working Group held discussions with the officers concerned with the Green Spaces Strategy, and with the manager of parks and recreation areas. We had access to the results of the Quality Assessments of all the parks carried out by staff, as well as the results of a public consultation exercise on issues for park managers. The views of older people did not appear to be fully represented in these exercises. The Working Group's proposal to assess parks for 'older person friendliness' was generally welcomed and supported by information and advice.

## METHOD

The method of work followed a similar process to that previously used in assessing the City Centre. The starting point was to seek the views of older people through a questionnaire distributed with the Elders Council Newsletter in 2007. An analysis of the 250 completed questionnaires gave information about members' frequency of visits, reasons for visits, access to and within parks, level of amenities, likes and dislikes, and suggestions for improvements.

Respondents were mainly within the age range 60-79 and three quarters of them were women. This sample is not claimed to be representative of all older people in the city but is taken as an indication of the views of a section of the older population who are active and interested citizens. A copy of the results is available on request.

The data were then used to provide a framework for an assessment of 'older person friendliness' of parks and recreation areas. A check list covering the features and amenities mentioned in replies was drawn up to be used in surveys during autumn 2007. These surveys were carried out by 8 members of the Working Group, mainly working individually. An exception was North Kenton where a Tenants and Residents Association were already involved in consultation, assisted by a community worker, who shared their findings with the Working Group. Members of the Community Safety Working Group of the Elders Council also assisted with the survey of Walker Park, where there was also contact with a group of local residents. In some instances surveyors were assessing a park they knew quite well, but in others it was a first-time visit to an unfamiliar neighbourhood. In all cases it was quite instructive for members to record objectively the main features of each park, together with their observations of the older person friendliness of the environment provided by the park.

The parks and recreation areas surveyed by this method were:

- Armstrong Park
- Benwell Nature Reserve
- Big Waters Country Park
- Brandling Park
- Elswick Park
- Exhibition Park
- Gosforth Central Park
- Heaton Park
- Hodgkin Park
- Iris Brickfield
- Jesmond Dene
- Leazes Park
- Newburn Riverside
- North Kenton Park
- Nunsmoor Park
- Paddy Freemans
- Town Moor
- Walker Park

## **CHARACTER OF PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS**

Each of the 18 parks surveyed had a different history ranging from the Victorian elegance of Leazes Park, and the landscaped Jesmond Dene, presented to the City by Lord Armstrong, and including several other parks on land acquired from the owners of estates, such as Heaton, Armstrong, Elswick and Hodgkin Park. Others have developed in response to events, such as Exhibition Park to provide a site for major exhibitions, or Gosforth Central Park to provide a site for a War Memorial. In these parks, as well as in smaller recreation areas, there has been a tradition of providing facilities for sport such as bowling greens and tennis courts, and play area for younger children. As sites have become available in some neighbourhoods, such as Kenton, Iris Brickfields, Paddy Freemans, they have been developed for community use. A different style of park can also be observed at Benwell Nature Park and at Country Parks such as Big Waters and Newburn Riverside. The Town Moor remains the largest green open space within the City boundary, although there have been intakes from it over the years, e.g. for Exhibition and Brandling Parks, and for Nuns Moor Park taken in from the Nuns Moor. The Moors are still used for pasture, and are open to walkers and cyclists, as well as providing a venue for special events such as the Annual Hoppings Festival. There is thus a variety of provision within the City.

Members had told us that their most frequent visits are to the park nearest to home and that they walk there. About a third of respondents, and rather more women than men, use public

transport and cars. For those who choose to visit a park which is not nearest to their home, transport is important, as it is for those who are never able to visit a park, but concerns about safety are rather more important than distance. These concerns feature again in the reasons for not visiting the park nearest to home, especially for women who do not feel safe walking alone. There are positive reasons also for visiting a park that is considered more interesting and to have better facilities, showing appreciation of the diversity of what is on offer, but for women especially the perception of the relative safety of a park or open space is an important consideration.



*Surveying Walker Park*

# **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

## **ACCESS, CIRCULATION AND INFORMATION**

### **Access**

Most of the parks covered by this survey, and especially the larger ones, could be accessed through a number of entrances. Ease of access varied depending on the terrain, as is discussed further below, but without exception, at least one entrance was within reasonable proximity of a bus stop. With the free bus travel provisions currently available to older people, this gives city wide access to the parks for those who are able to use a bus.

The situation is somewhat less favourable for those unable to use public transport, as there is not always car parking, either within the park or in the nearby streets. However two examples of parks with good parking facilities are Newburn and Heaton.

### **Circulation**

The surfaces of the principal walkways were covered in tarmac or gravel and were, by and large, in good condition with only an occasional pothole or rut. The latter seem unlikely to constitute a serious impediment for those with average walking abilities but would of course, be of significance to wheelchair users.

### **Terrain**

A number of parks are situated on the sides of a valley or on fairly steeply sloping terrain. Having once entered the park, therefore, further progress and circulation may then become difficult for those with mobility problems, because of the need to descend fairly steeply sloping paths or flights of steps. This consideration has a bearing upon the location of seating (see below).

### **Information**

Almost all the parks had a notice board containing a map of the park at one of the main entrances. Some, but not all, also had interesting descriptions of the history of the park. Unfortunately some of the other material was not always up to date and some

boards were vandalised. Having once entered the park there was normally no other indication of the location of the park's amenities. Information setting out the opening times of amenities such as cafes and toilets would be very welcome.



*Vandalised information board at Heaton Park*

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- The present report shows that Newcastle's parks have much to offer to older people. However to make them even more older person friendly, the outstanding requirement is the provision of additional information. As easy access and circulation within the park is so important to older people, more information should be available at the entrances to a park. Some parks have new attractive metalwork gates (Elswick, Hodgkin Park) which draw attention to the entrances. In addition we need attractively-designed information boards (vandal proof, if possible) that are kept up to date. Traditionally on entering a park we were confronted by a list of the by laws telling us what was forbidden. What we need now is information about what there is to enjoy, indicating easy walking routes avoiding steep gradients, location of cafes and toilets (and their opening times) and interesting features of the park at different seasons. In our surveys we found many examples of defaced notice boards, with out-of-date grubby posters, giving an immediate impression that nobody cared about the park. As part of

this recommendation we consider it necessary that there should be clear responsibility (either a Friends volunteer or a park worker) to keep the information board up to date.



*Excellent information board at Jesmond Dene*

## Seats

In our survey of members' views, seats were rated the most important amenity for the vast majority of older visitors, both regular and occasional. Surveyors found where benches were provided they were normally in good condition. A common feature was for benches to be grouped in clusters around a particular facility such as a bowling green, lake or children's play area. In areas distant from such facilities, the provision of benches was sometimes rather sparse. It was also noted above that some parks were on sloping terrain which might make it difficult for those with mobility problems to venture far into the park. A particularly apt arrangement was noted in Elswick Park, where the flowerbeds can be viewed from benches placed around the Pavilion.

## RECOMMENDATION

- It would be helpful for a number of benches to be placed close to the entrances of the park, so that those with mobility limitations could benefit from park environment without having to negotiate slopes or steps.

- Our survey of members' views gave looking at flowers and vegetation as one of the principal reasons for visiting a park. Placing benches near to flowerbeds would therefore increase the attractiveness of the park for the older visitor.

### **Litter Bins, Cleanliness, Dog Fouling**

All the parks visited appeared to be well provided with litter bins and in no case were they observed to be overflowing with rubbish. This finding is of some importance as the survey of members' opinions rated litter bins and cleanliness as being one of the three most important amenities provided within parks.

### **Dog Walking**

Our observers noted the widespread practice by dog owners of using parks as places to exercise their dogs. Some dogs were on leads, while others were allowed to roam freely, but were well controlled by their owners. Although little evidence of dog fouling was reported, few parks had receptacles provided for this purpose. Notices were observed at Hodgkin Park warning of penalties for allowing dogs to foul, while at Big Waters pouches were available for disposing of dog fouling.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The state of cleanliness is very important for older visitors to parks, so it is important that there are sufficient litter bins and that they are emptied frequently. There should also be penalties for dropping litter in parks as well as on the street.
- As dog fouling can be a very unpleasant nuisance, it would be much appreciated if notices were posted in all parks concerning penalties for allowing dogs to foul. Even better would be the provision of pouches and appropriate receptacles.

### **Toilets**

The provision of toilets is not regarded as of vital importance with respect to the smaller parks since such facilities should be within easy reach outside of the park. Importance is however attached to

the situation in respect of the larger parks, the more so since our survey of members' views rated the availability of toilets as one of the three most important amenities provided within parks.

Our observers found that toilets were available in some, but not all, of the larger parks. However in some cases these facilities were locked with neither an indication of opening times nor the location of a key holder.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- It is accepted that in the absence of park staff there may be a need to lock toilets as protection from vandalism. In such an event notices with information about opening times and / or a key holder would be of much benefit to older visitors.

## **Safety and Security**

In our survey of members' views, those who indicated that they never visit a park gave the major reason as concerns about personal safety. However, safety was also of significant concern to those who were regular park visitors.

Overall our observers found little visible evidence of staff on duty or security equipment. An exception was Nunsmoor Park where police were observed strolling through the park. In addition there was also a notice board giving contact details in case of concerns regarding safety and security. In a number of other parks gardening staff were observed at work and when approached proved helpful in providing information.

Our observers were divided in their opinion concerning the size bushes should be permitted to grow. Some were in favour of as much interesting foliage as possible, while others regarded large bushes as a potential security hazard. Other causes of fear mentioned, especially by those who do not visit parks at all or who do not visit their nearest park, is fear of groups of younger people.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- Fears about safety and security for older people are often said to be a matter of perception rather than reality. A

possible way forward may be to involve local residents and park visitors in discussions about the size of bushes and trees, and to encourage focus groups on safety and security issues, jointly with staff, and on an intergenerational basis if possible.

### **Café and Refreshments; Shelters**

Six of the parks visited had either a café or one very nearby offering refreshments. Both Jesmond Dene and Leazes Park had cafes which were open every day. Some of the others were closed when visited with no indication of days or times when they were open.

A few of the larger parks provide shelters in the form of pavilions. Our observers found some of these to be locked with no information about times when they were open to the public. Traditional park shelters, open at all times, were observed to be targeted by vandals and graffiti writers.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Where cafés have restricted opening times, it would be very helpful to post notices with details of hours of business, especially as cafes may be key holders to toilets.

### **Sports Facilities and Activities**

Almost all of the parks have one or more sporting facility, including those for bowls and croquet (which are probably of most interest to older people) as well as basketball, tennis and football. Clearly the maintenance of these is dependent on funding and in some cases there was evidence of lack of investment.

Regular users of these facilities are important stakeholders in parks. Participation in a sport also extends to social involvement as well if there is a club with a meeting place in the park, e.g. bowls and croquet pavilions. A skateboard park, recently introduced to Exhibition Park, was welcomed by younger people and observed to be well used.

## **Play Equipment**

Almost all the parks had children's play areas containing a variety of play equipment. This was considered to be of very high standard and well maintained. For a small park, Iris Brickfield was noted as having two play areas, each one equipped with a range of excellent equipment. Safe play equipment in a fenced-off area for younger children is appreciated by grandparents looking after grandchildren. For older children there is now a range of equipment for more adventurous activities. Although there have been developments in the design and safety of children's play areas it was noted that there has been no comparable development of outdoor exercise equipment for older people.

## **Special Events**

Parks can provide suitable locations for one-off special events, such as concerts and exhibitions, sponsored walks and runs, or for an activity over several weeks, such as cycling in Exhibition Park. Well publicised annual events, such as the Mela in Exhibition Park and the Green Festival in Leazes Park, are very popular. Some parks still have bandstands, where concerts can be held in the summer.

The members who participated in the Senior Games event in Horsens, Denmark, May 2008 observed the use made of parks there for Senior Games. Activity groups took equipment to parks to set up Viking games, Krolf (a cross between golf and croquet), rounders, petanque, Nordic Walking and croquet, so a varied programme was available suitable for different abilities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Sports facilities need to be well maintained for the benefit of existing and future users.
- Consideration should be given to finding locations – and funding – for out of door exercise equipment suitable for older people (and as now provided in a park in Manchester).
- The potential for organising 'senior games' days in parks should be explored by local activity groups.

## OLDER PERSON FRIENDLINESS

Observers were asked to rate the parks for older person friendliness using seven criteria. These were based on the factors most frequently mentioned in the survey of members' views, and included:

- peaceful, tranquil atmosphere
- safe walking routes
- well maintained flowerbeds
- opportunities to watch birds and animals
- band concerts
- free from graffiti and signs of vandalism
- family picnic areas.

Two parks were found to satisfy all seven criteria and these were Leazes and Nunsmoor Parks. Even though most parks did not satisfy all the criteria, they never the less had a lot to offer the older visitor. So for example our preliminary questionnaire concerning members preferences showed that Jesmond Dene, with Pets' Corner and an excellent café was the most popular choice for a visitor. The sensory gardens in Nunsmoor and Exhibition Parks were found to be as much of an attraction for sighted people as for those with impaired vision, for whom these gardens were intended. Similarly Gosforth Central Park was described as 'offering an oasis of tranquillity in a busy suburban area'. Newburn Park on the other hand offered riverside walks and a wide and interesting range of outdoor activities.

The parks that scored least well and therefore where there is room for improvement, were Kenton Park and Hodgkin Park. A local residents group is already involved in working to improve Kenton Park and there are bids for funding pending for Elswick Park, Armstrong and Heaton Parks, and Walker Park. All other parks were found to have some interesting features to attract visitors, but require a good standard of maintenance. Surveyors noted interesting planting schemes and mature trees in most parks, special features such as a maze and the Art in the Park project at Leazes Park, and the importance of ponds and lakes to attract wild life. Some parks still retain colourful floral displays (as in Heaton Park) although these require more maintenance than shrubs and

bushes. For anyone interested in nature parks, Benwell offers restricted opportunities because of difficult terrain, although there is a link between the nature park and some features introduced to Hodgkin Park. Newburn Riverside and Big Waters Country Park provide access to nature and wild life on more level paths.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The sensory gardens in Nunsmoor Park and Exhibition Park were developed in partnership with local people and Newcastle Society for Blind People, resulting in features that are popular with everyone. Further initiatives of this kind are most likely to produce attractive features in other parks.
- Any plans for refurbishing and developing parks would benefit from the involvement of local people so as to take into account the features important to older people. This report provides some evidence which can be used in future discussions.



*Local people preparing tubs for planting at Nunsmoor Park*

## GETTING INVOLVED

In the course of this work, we have come across examples where people 'getting involved' has made a difference. During surveys it was noted that some parks are surrounded by blocks of flats and terraced houses without gardens. These parks can be a valuable local amenity. Involving local people would be helpful to ensure that local needs are met, and may also improve security if there are stakeholders with an interest in the park.

Leagues of Friends offer a traditional route to getting involved, and have often developed helpful relationships with park management. The Friends of Leazes Park, for instance, were involved in securing substantial funding from the heritage lottery funding to restore and develop the historic park. The Friends continue to watch over the standard of maintenance, and the usage of the amenities of the Park. Over several years the Exhibition Park Trust has held extensive discussions with park users about future developments on this site. Friends of Jesmond Dene have participated in putting together the major funding bid for the Ouseburn Valley parks.

Brandling Park is an interesting example of local people getting involved and making a difference. Neighbours with a common interest in this small park joined together to improve the planting and the appearance of the park. Their efforts were supported by parks management, resulting in the award of a 'green flag'. There is therefore a benefit to parks management and also to local residents who enjoyed working together to improve their environment.

Voluntary and community groups also offer a way of getting involved, sometimes resulting from a common interest, e.g. amenities for disabled people, or sometimes from an interest in the locality. Kenton Park is an example where a group of residents concerned about the rundown state of their park are working together with a community worker to bring about improvements. They conducted surveys of local people and canvassed their views about the future of the park to provide evidence of what needs to be done.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Getting local people involved brings benefit to all concerned, ensuring that developments are influenced by local opinions, and promoting social interaction between neighbours and park users. We therefore recommend that park managers extend opportunities for local people to get involved.

## **BRANDLING AND EXHIBITION PARKS FRIENDS GROUP Newsletter Winter 2007**

Winning a Green Flag Award this year was a great achievement for the Friends Group. It also demonstrated how community action can stimulate action by the Council. For the Friends not only 'Brightened up Brandling' with their flowers, they persuaded the Council to install seat and litter bins, and this year to resurface the paths and make the steps safer by repairing them and installing hand rails. We are pleased too that the Council have improved the grass cutting. Winning the Green Flag gives the Friends and the community more credibility with the Council, helping make the parks more attractive.

## **NORTH KENTON TENANTS' AND RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION Summary of the Park Consultation**

People were asked 'What would you like to use the park for?' This is how they responded:

- |                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| ▪ Taking children to play:     | 54 |
| ▪ Picnics:                     | 30 |
| ▪ Walking:                     | 24 |
| ▪ Sport:                       | 23 |
| ▪ Enjoying fresh air:          | 22 |
| ▪ Taking exercise:             | 17 |
| ▪ Meeting friends:             | 16 |
| ▪ Watching birds and wildlife: | 15 |
| ▪ Dog walking:                 | 14 |

## SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The following list brings together the suggestions from questionnaires, from surveys, and from recent discussions and visits.

### Outdoor exercise equipment for older people

The installation of equipment at Dam Head Park, Blackley, North Manchester was well publicised recently. A member has visited this park, observed –and used – the equipment, obtained details of manufacturer and cost\*. There has been much investment, and some welcome developments, in play equipment for children. As the balance of age groups in the population changes, it would be timely to invest in equipment suitable for older people.



*Testing out the 'Space Walker'*



*Testing out the exercise bike*



*Testing out the leg press*

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\* Report available on request.

**Groundworks Green Gym Days** offer considerable potential for involving people in taking more exercise, developing skills, enjoying open air activities and planting trees. This is the kind of initiative that meets several targets, e.g. improving health and fitness, promoting care for the environment and increasing social interaction especially when there is real involvement with a local community.

### **Senior Games**

There is potential for a wider range of activities in parks that would interest older people. Reference has been made to the experiences of the group who participated in Senior Games in Denmark in the summer. The ideas they have brought provide a basis for a future programme in the parks. A full report is available, together with photographs of participants enjoying activities.

### **Walking Routes and Nordic Walking**

Walking events in parks have been tried and have been well supported. There are safe walking areas in most parks but there is interest in longer walking routes that would connect between parks and green spaces while still providing a safe environment. Nordic walking is an activity suitable for older people and could be developed locally. There are already some keen walking groups in the city, so Nordic walking would be an extension of what is currently on offer.

### **Picnics in the Park**

A Picnopolis event was held in August in Newcastle-Gateshead. This involved a symposium on Transforming Public Spaces and the promotion by Picnopolis, a Japanese organisation, of a series of picnics in public places. A grassed area in the shape of a plane was taken to the sites, which included some parks, for people to sit on for their picnic. The Tokyo Picnic Club uses public spaces for members to enjoy eating and talking together. Tokyo has 5.4 square metres of parks and open spaces per head of population, compared with 69 square metres per head for the population of Newcastle-Gateshead. The programme and the symposium generated public interest (in spite of the weather!) We would

encourage an extension in use of parks and open spaces for picnics.

### **A Botanic Garden**

Extending the University's existing botanic garden in Claremont Road into Exhibition Park has been suggested and would be a desirable development jointly with the City if substantial funding ever becomes available in the future. In the meantime a smaller scale development might be feasible, at least to provide a demonstration allotment in view of the interest in growing vegetables.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The account of the findings from surveys includes a number of recommendations on specific points. These can be summarised, in order of priority as:

### Information

- Well maintained, up-to-date, information boards at entrances to parks and signage within parks indicating location of amenities, easy walking routes, and current activities.

### Amenities

- Seats – to be well maintained in convenient locations, where there is something to enjoy.
- Toilets, to be signposted, well maintained, and opening times indicated.
- Cafes/refreshments, opening times to be clearly indicated.
- Cleanliness, litter bins to be looked after, penalties for dog fouling to be enforced.

### Safety and Security

- Involve local people and park users, including older people in giving their views about overgrown bushes.
- Promote focus groups on safety fears, on intergenerational basis if possible.

### Sports Facilities and Activities

- Sports facilities, existing facilities to be well maintained.
- Outdoor Exercise Equipment – to be extended to include equipment suitable for older people.
- Special Events in parks to include

activities for older people, e.g. senior games.

- Publicity for events such as Summer Programme to be promoted to older people's groups.

### Older Person Friendliness

- Any future plans should include the features identified by older people as important to their enjoyment – peaceful, tranquil places to sit, with opportunities to observe flowers and trees, and watch birds and animals.
- Opportunities to take exercise in the open air on safe walking routes.
- Sensory gardens for the enjoyment of all visitors, including people with disabilities.

### Getting Involved

- Extend opportunities for people, including older people, to be involved in looking after their local parks, and in planning new features and developments.

## **A FINAL COMMENT**

This report covers the Working Groups findings about features in parks that encourage – or discourage – visits by older people. We have also outlined some ways in which local people can become more involved in parks together with some ideas for the future. For parks to continue to flourish and develop it is fundamental that sufficient resources are available to maintain present standards and staffing levels. There also needs to be investment in the processes of involvement so that future plans are developed in partnership with local groups, park users, and all interested stakeholders. The Elders Council wishes to enable older people to express their views about the environment in which they live. In any future discussions about healthy communities and lifetime neighbourhoods, it has been recognised that access to green open spaces is an important contribution to both mental health and physical wellbeing. Older person friendly environments have an important role in improving the quality of life of an ageing population.

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